

BURMA

RAF Censor Type R8 was used by the RAF in Burma and only 2 different numbers, (29 and 32) have been recorded and very few of these are known. These eventually arrived in India, No 29 via China and No 32 presumably by foot with the remnants of the RAF making the long and dangerous march through Burma to Imphal. There are only a few recordings of both.

At this stage of the war in the Far East mail was sent by air to Durban and then to the UK by sea as endorsed on this envelope 'Air to Durban/Sea to UK'.



Air Mail cover with 1Rupee postage and 'BASE P.O. BURMA' postmark dated 15th January, 1942 and RAF Censor R8/32 with 'OPENED BY CENSOR' crested label.

Sender; AC Taylor, RAF Moulmein. No 60 Squadron was based at Mingaladon with a detachment of Buffalo aircraft at Moulmein. Moulmein was taken by the Japanese on 29th January, 1942.

Taylor apparently survived the war and presumably made it back to India with the rest of the surviving RAF personnel.

ROYAL AIR FORCE CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

BURMA

Following the fall of Rangoon on the 8th March, 1942, Mingaladon airfield was abandoned and the RAF moved to an improvised airstrip near Mandalay to provide support for the retreating Allied Army. At Magwe, X Wing became Burwing under Group Capt. S Broughall with No. 17 and 45 RAF Squadrons and the survivors of the American Volunteer Squadron (The Flying Tigers). The Japanese advance forced the Allied Air Force to move further north to Lashio and Loiwing to support the Chinese Fifth Army. By mid April the situation was so bad that the decision to withdraw to Calcutta was made, however, 344 RAF ground staff, (including 20 officers), were left behind and made their way in 150 assorted vehicles along the hazardous road from Lashio to Chungtu in China where they remained for over a year assisting the Chinese Air Force. They were eventually flown over 'the Hump' in Kunming to Chabua in India.



Plain 'On Active Service' cover with 'By Air Mail' label and Burmese stamps, (one removed), and 'Calcutta GPO, Air-D' postmark dated 21st May, 1942 and RAF Censor R8/32.
The sender was Cpl Chappell, c/o Burwing, RAF Burma and written on 14th April, 1942 possibly at Loiwing, taken 'per favour' to Calcutta where it was posted on 21st May, 1942, with Cpl Chappell remaining behind and becoming one of the 344 who went to China.

CHINA

By the middle of April, 1942 the Japanese advance against British Forces in Northern Burma were such that the RAF fighter aircraft based at Lashio and Loiwing giving limited support to the Chinese Fifth Army were withdrawn to Calcutta. There were 20 officers and 324 ground staff airmen left behind who moved off in convoy with around 150 vehicles along the very hazardous road from Lashio to Chungtu in China. The route took them along The Burma Road which snaked across the Himalayan mountains zig-zagging on the tremendous slopes with many hairpin bends with steep drops to the valleys below. They also had to negotiate the many army and civilian refugees on the road. They eventually reached Chungtu, a large university town in Szechuan province 200 miles north of the wartime capital Chungking. They remained in Chungtu as 'Rafchin' for over a year training the Chinese ground crews and also to a certain extent, the mechanics of Radio Direction Finding on the Radar Unit they had brought from Magwe. They eventually flew from Kunming over 'the hump' to India after spending a year in China.

Only one RAF Censor is known from 'Rafchin' Type R8/63.



Air Mail cover sent by Cpl Jefferson with 'Chengdu' postmark and RAF Censor R8/63 and Chinese mark (censor?). The route is shown as via Calcutta and Cairo to Lagos by BOAC.

CHINA

EXAMINER 7454

B.O.A.C., LAGOS, NIGERIA, CALCUTTA, CAIRO
PAA. TO DESTINATION, AIR MAIL.

H/C POW (RAF)

West Camp. Guard
Harrowell Camp,
Harrow
London
England.



OPENED BY

TRUST. O. & P. Ltd.

P.C. 90



Air Mail envelope which contained a RAF China Christmas Card for 1942 with Chinese stamps and 'Chengtu' postmark sent by an airman to RAF Henlow. The sender stated on the card that he had escaped from the Japanese advance in Burma.

The envelope is endorsed 'BOAC, Lagos Nigeria, Calcutta, Cairo PAA to Destination' and sealed with an 'OPENED BY EXAMINER 7454' PC90 label on arrival in the UK.

CHINA

c/o MR ATTACHE
CHUNGKING
Greetings CHINA
FROM
THE R.A.F. IN CHINA
Christmas 1942



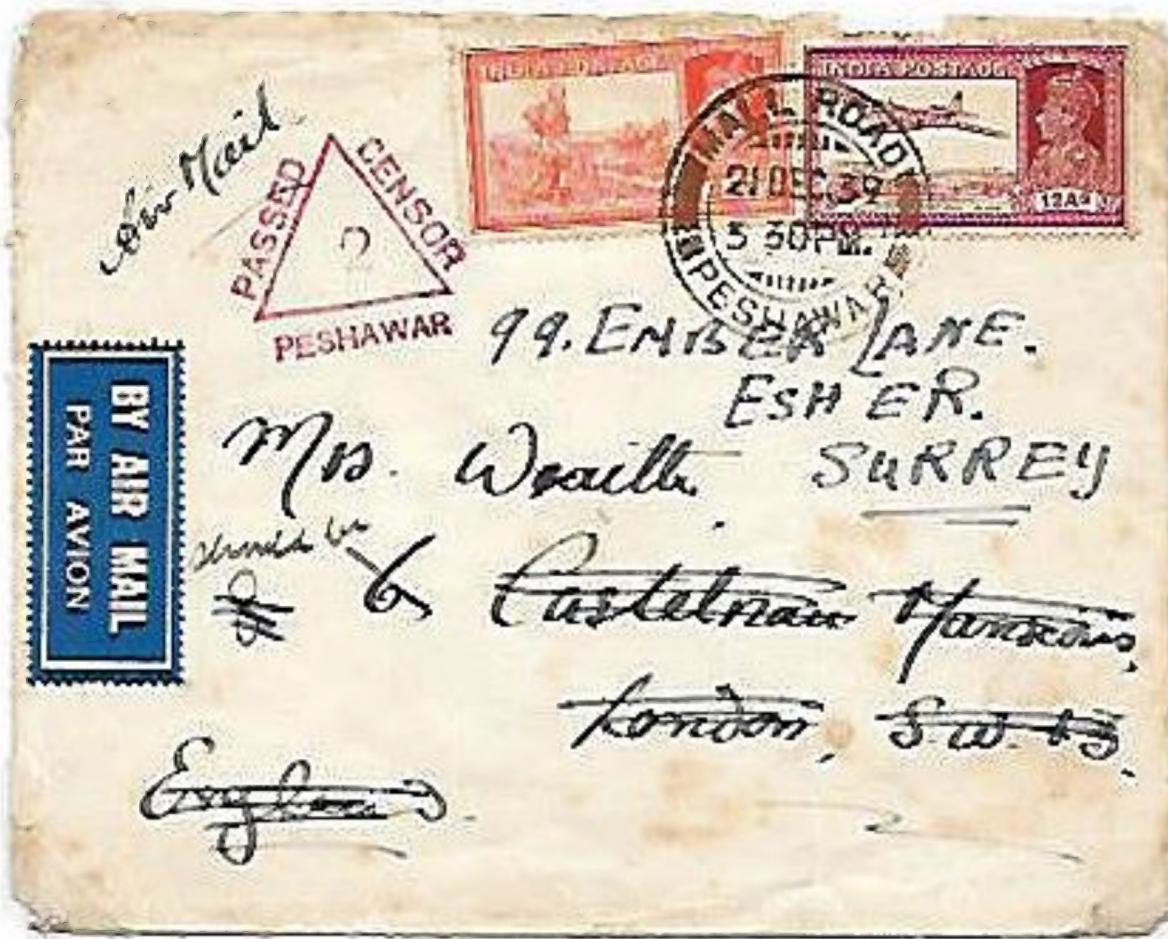
1942 RAF China Christmas card sent by an airman to RAF Henlow from Chungking with his address 'c/o Air Attache, Chungking, China'. The airman states that he 'came out of Burma'. He was one of 344 RAF personnel who had been stationed in Burma and was unable to 'escape' to India and ended up in China for over a year before they could fly over 'the hump' to India. It would appear that mail to these airman was sent via the Air Attache.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

At the beginning of 1939 the RAF presence in India was concentrated in the North West province, now Pakistan. There were airfields at Karachi, Lahore and Ambala and 3 more in the Kyber Pass, Kohat, Peshawar and Risalpur.

Censorship of mail was introduced in September, 1939, but unlike the rest of the Royal Air Force where it was introduced with standard censor marks, in India it appears to have been done locally. It was not until November, 1942 that a standard censor mark (R 52) was introduced. As a result there are a wide variety of censor marks recorded.



Cover sent by an RAF Pilot Officer from RAF Peshawar postmarked 'Mall Road Peshawar 21st December, 1939 to London and redirected to Esher.

The censor is a civil triangular 'Passed by Censor Peshawar' with a 2 in the centre. At the time 2 RAF Squadrons Nos. 20 & 27 were based at Peshawar operating Hawker Audax and Wapiti IIA's which were light bomber or observation aircraft.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

RAF Karachi

The RAF had various airfields in the Karachi area and the RAF established an airfield at Karachi in 1935. This is now the site of Jinnah International airport. RAF Mauripur and Drigh Road were two bases close by. The RAF closed RAF Karachi in October 1946 and Mauripur in December 1956.

In January 1946 RAF personnel in Karachi, Drigh Road and Mauripur went on strike in protest at the delay in repatriation of RAF servicemen in India and this soon spread to over 60 RAF bases in India Command and the Far East involving some 60,000 men. The strike lasted 11 days and a handful of RAF servicemen were court marshalled with the blame being placed on Communists in the service.



Air Mail cover sent to London with 14 annas postage and 'Bombay Foreign' postmark dated 2nd January 1940 and triangular 'Passed Censor Bombay S' and sealed with 'PASSED/BY/CENSOR/82' label.
Return address was c/o RAF Karachi, India.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

India had been relatively unaffected by the war until the Japanese offensive in Burma in May, 1942 and consequently there was very little standardised censorship of RAF mail. Various local censor marks were used and it appears that type R16 may have been the first attempt by the RAF in India to issue a censor mark for general use on RAF mail. Even so very few recordings have been made of the 25 or so numbers between 7 and 98 are known, and it is therefore a relatively scarce mark. Its use appears to have been in the Calcutta area in north east India between July and November, 1942.



Cover (above) with Air Mail rate (8annas) to UK with Calcutta GPO Air-D machine cancel dated 22nd July, 1942 and RAF censor Type R16/8.

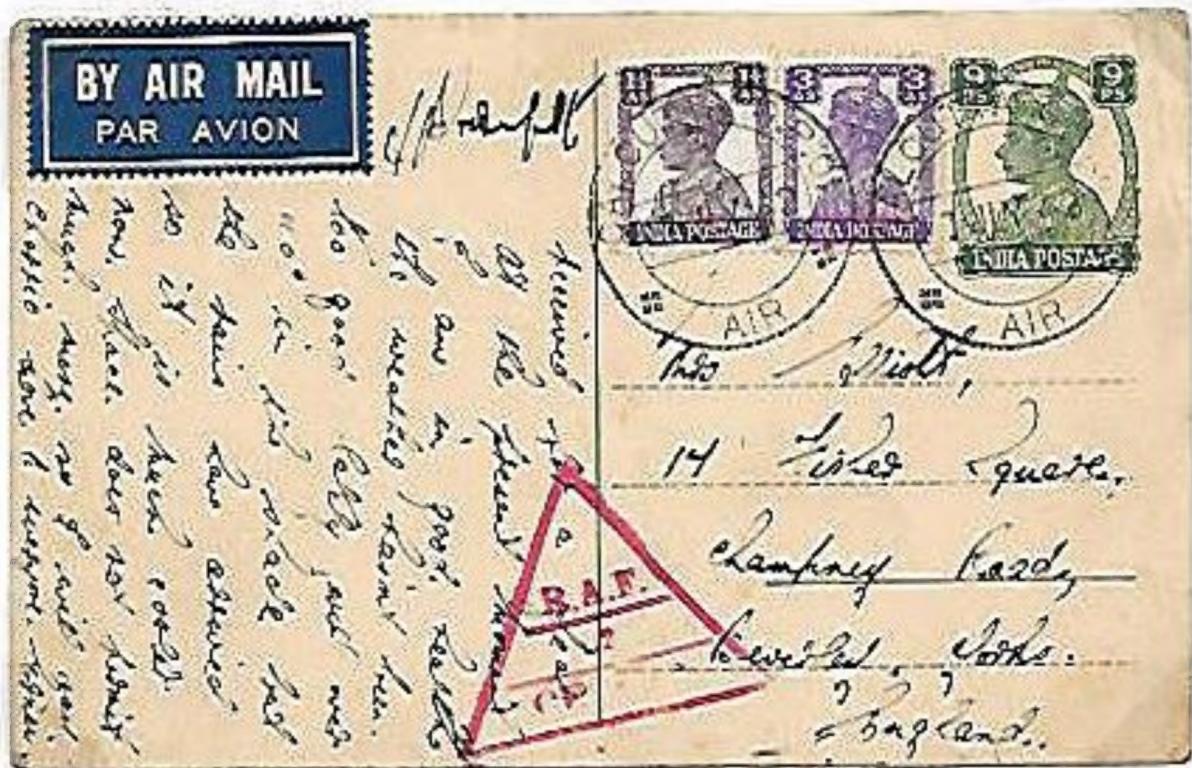
Post card (bottom) with Air Mail rate (4annas) to UK with Calcutta GPO cds cancel dated 6th August, 1942 and RAF censor R16/98 and Indian censor DHA/25.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

RAF Ondal is in Northern India and 34 Squadron operating with Blenheim IV's were based there from 17th June 1942 until 21st January, 1943. The main purpose was to attack the Japanese in Burma.

It would appear that RAF Ondal was only used for a short time in 1942 – 43 and the only other RAF Squadron to be based there was No. 110 Sqn for 20 days in October 1942. Other Units based there were 82 Repair and Salvage Unit and 96 Stores Park.



Post card sent by LAC Elliott, 34 Squadron, RAF India to his grandmother in Beverley, Yorkshire.

Postmarked 'Calcutta GPO AIR 7th July, 1942'. The post card is dated 1st July suggesting that RAF Ondal was a small unit some distance from Calcutta.

The card has been censored with RAF censor R24 a triangular 'RAF/*2/Censor'. There are 2 numbers already recorded in this censor, 72 and 221, but neither of these appear to fit. It has been suggested that the numbers may be attributed to Groups but the only connection between the few recordings is Calcutta.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

Air Headquarters was located in Government House Barrackpore, West Bengal. This was also used by the Army as a Headquarters.



On Active Service cover sent by an Officer to his tailors in Crowborough. It has a Barrackpore 15th July, 1942 postmark.

It has been self censored by the sender with a RAF censor Type R 40, circular 'Air Headquarters Bengal with RAF Passed by Censor' in the centre. Very few examples of this censor have been recorded.

In addition a base censor has been applied.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

RAF Dum Dum is located in West Bengal near Calcutta and bore the brunt of the evacuation of refugees from Burma in 1942.

31 Squadron operating with Dakotas and DC 2's carried out casualty evacuation and supply missions to and from Burma in 1942.

The airfield is now used by the Indian Air Force.



Cover sent by Warrant Officer Froud from RAF Dum Dum to the UK postmarked 'Calcutta GPO 11th May, 1942'.

It was redirected from Carlisle to Wigton on 6th July, 1942.

The cover has been censored by Plt Off Cooper with a RAF censor type R 57 'RAF STATION DUM DUM' with 'SECURITY' in the centre. Very few of these are known.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

RAF Risalpur was one of 3 RAF airfields located in the Kyber Pass, North West Frontier and No 27 Squadron was based there with Wapiti, Tiger Moth and Hart aircraft operating as a Training Unit. The Squadron was equipped with Blenheim If's and posted to Malaya in February 1941 where they suffered terrible losses. The survivors retired to Sumatra the Squadron ceased to exist in February, 1942.



Cover sent by J Cosgrove, RAF Risalpur, North West Frontier Province on 27th November, 1939 with a Risalpur cancel.
It has an R41 censor 'Royal Air Force/CENSORED' of which very few have been recorded.

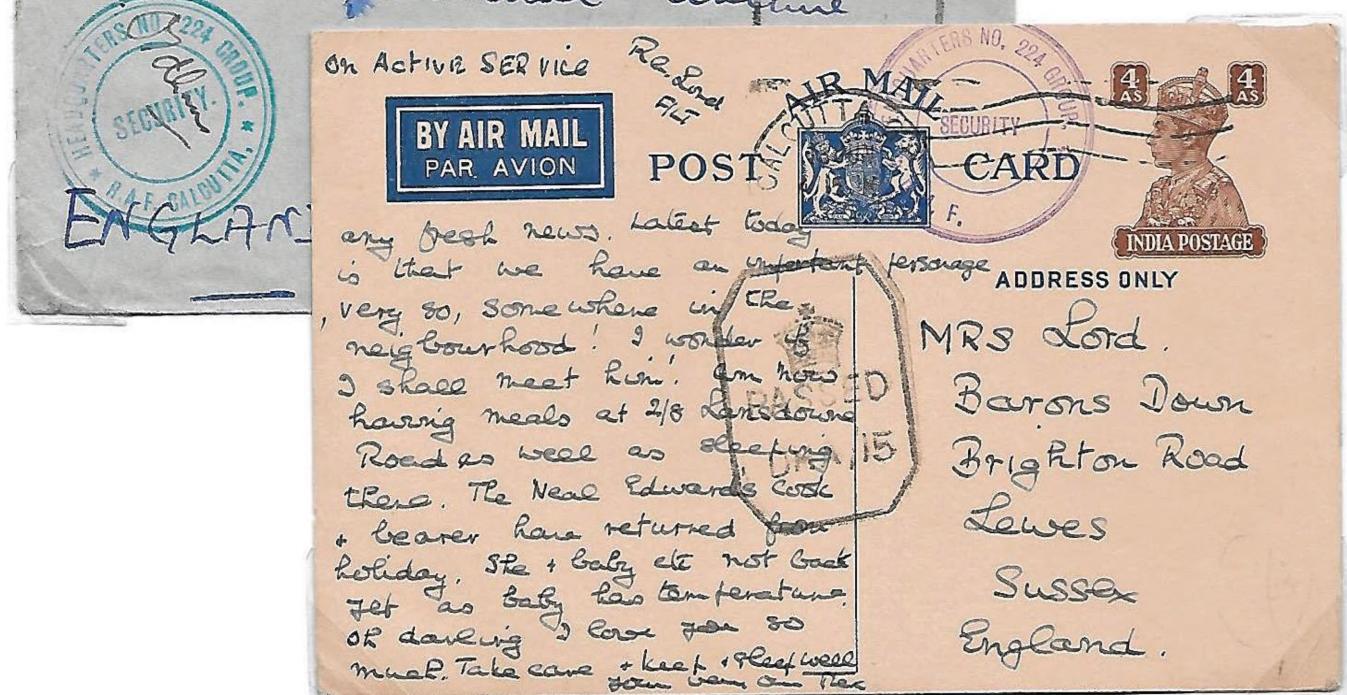
Risalpur is now used by the Pakistan Air Force as an academy.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN INDIA

CENSORSHIP IN WORLD WAR 2

In 1942 when the Calcutta area was being inundated with refugees from Burma it would appear that a variety of cachets were also used by the Internal Security authorities for censorship purposes. 2 such Unit cachets, Type R44, are shown below.

Both covers have double ring 'Headquarters No 224 Group' at the top and 'security' in the centre. However one has 'RAF Calcutta' in full at the bottom and the other has 'Calcutta' removed



Both are postmarked Calcutta in June 1942 and have received the Imperial Censor for India 'Passed Censor DHA/15' hand stamps.

Air Mail cover with 8anna postage sent to West Wickham, Kent and a preprinted postcard 4anna rate sent by Flt Lt R Lord to Lewes, Sussex

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN WORLD WAR 2

RAF RISALPUR

RAF Risalpur was one of 3 RAF airfields located in the Kyber Pass, North West Frontier and No 27 Squadron was based there with Wapiti, Tiger Moth and Hart aircraft operating as a Training Unit. The Squadron was equipped with Blenheim If's and posted to Malaya in February 1941 where they suffered terrible losses. The survivors retired to Sumatra and the Squadron ceased to exist in February, 1942 only to be killed or captured by the Japanese. Very few managed to be evacuated to Australia.

The sender of this cover was lucky and remained in India for the duration of the war



Air Mail cover endorsed 'India - Auckland - England' with 1 x 2Ruppee and 3 x 8annas stamps and 'RISALPUR' postmark dated 10th March, 1941 and Indian triangle 'Passed Censor A 11' Base censor mark with 'OPENEDBY CENSOR' label.

The sender was Warrant Officer J R Froud, RAF Risalpur.

Risalpur is now an Academy for the Pakistani Air Force.